Light Combat Aircraft, 5.56mm Indian Small Arms System (INSAS), Pilotless Target Aircaft are denovo technology development projects. Delays in such developmental projects are inherent. No project, however, has been stymied due to the delays. After successful completion of indigenous development, MBT Arjun, 5.56mm Indian Small Arms System (INSAS) and Pilotless Target Aircraft (PTA) have already entered production phase. The Light Combat Aircraft and Advance Light Helicopter projects are progressing satisfactorily. Project Sea Bird is a construction project and is scheduled to be completed in 2005 AD. It will not be in public interest to divulge more information on individual projects.

Extension of canteen facility to retired civilian employees

39. SHRI O.P. KOHLI: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Ministry of Defence is aware that while other Ministries like Communications and Railways are extending benefits to their retired employees in the shape of allotment of PCOs/ ISD/STD on out-of-turn basis and giving free railway travelling passes etc., no such facility is extended by his Ministry to its retired civilain employees to use the canteen facilities; and

(b) if so, whether there is any proposal to extend this facility to the reitired civilian employees in Delhi in this Golden Jubilee year of Independence?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI N.V.N. SOMU): (a) and (b) The Canteen Stores Department has been set up primarily for the benefit of Defence Service Personnel and the extension of a portion of this facility to certain categories of Defence Civilian Personnel is incidental. As the conditions of servic. of such civilian personnel are quite distinct from those of Defence Service Personnel, further extension of this benefit to retired personnel is not considered necessary. Nor can it be justified in the light of tax concessions and the additional infrastructural expenditure involved. As such presently there is no proposal to extend these facilities to the retired Civilian Defence employees in Delhi in this Golden Jubilee Year of Independence.

Agreement for purchase of aircrafts

40. SHRI SANJAY NIRUPAM: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have signed any agreement with any country for purchase of sophisticated aircrafts during the last two years; and

(b) if so, the details thereof indicating the names of the country and the terms and condition of agreement signed?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI N.V.N. SOMU): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Government of India have signed an agreement with Russia for procurement of 40 SU-30MK aircraft in a phased manner, over a period of five years. The contract provides for outright purchase of the aircraft with sophisticated equipment and armaments, followed by transfer of technology and licenced manufacture of the aircraft in India by HAL, for subse quent supplies.

India-Poland tank upgrade project

41. SHRI AKHILESH DAS: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to a news item published in the 'Hindu' dated 1st July, 1997 regarding India-Poland working on tank upgrade project; and

(b) if so, the details in this regard, and